



Press Release

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By: Sgt. Edward Eagerton

Alaska Army National Guardsmen conduct combat training in Idaho

ORCHARD COMBAT TRAINING CENTER, IDAHO—Approximately 375 Soldiers from the Alaska Army National Guard are participating in the Exportable Combat Training Capability program near Gowen Field, Idaho, Jun. 11.

The Guardsmen from the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade have been here since June 1. The Exportable Combat Training Capability program is a field training exercise designed to certify unit proficiency and is validated by graders from the First Army Division.

"This exercise allows us to work on our information flow and reporting techniques, and it allows us to establish and confirm our standard operating procedures," said 1st Lt. Vance Johnson, executive officer of C Company, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, Alaska Army National Guard.

The field-exercise portions of the training are being held at the Orchard Combat Training Center, which is a high-plains-desert environment, simulating environments like that of Afghanistan. The training consists of various scenarios including route clearance, calls-for-fire missions, reconnaissance patrols, resupply missions, convoy operations and improvised explosive device training.

"To come into a unit straight out of a deployment, to actually be back on a hill doing live fire, it's awesome training," said Sgt. Matthew Blanchett III, a forward observer with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard.

Blanchett, along with six other forward observers, spent four days in the dusty hills of the training area calling in live-fire mortar missions and conducted training on an M1200 Armored Knight, which is an armored security vehicle specifically designed for forward observers to target enemy objectives.

In another area of the training grounds, Soldiers from the 207th Brigade Support Company, Alaska Army National Guard, conducted convoy training where they encountered multiple

improvised explosive devices and small arms fire and trained on interacting with locals in a simulated village with the help of an embedded translator.

"The IED training was special to me, because I've been deployed and I've dealt with similar real-world situations," said Spc. Stephen Crowe, a motor transport operator with the 207th Brigade Support Company, Alaska Army National Guard. "It's unique training because it's preparing our soldiers who haven't been deployed by giving them an idea of what they might face if they go downrange."

The Alaska Guardsmen are scheduled to return on Jun. 13 at the close of the two-week exercise.

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Cutlines:

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Forward observers from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard calculate grid coordinates for calling in close air support at the Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho, June 10. The Soldiers are at the training site for their annual training, where they are given the opportunity to enhance their skillsets for future deployments. Photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

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A cavalry scout with Alpha Troop, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, Alaska Army National Guard scans the horizon for enemy combatants during a route clearance patrol at the Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho, June 10. The Soldiers of Alpha Troop are at the training site for their annual training, where they are given the opportunity to enhance their skillsets for future deployments. Photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

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Cavalry scouts with Alpha Troop, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, Alaska Army National Guard, conduct route clearance patrols at the Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho, June 10. The Soldiers are at the training site for their annual training, where they are given the opportunity to enhance their skillsets for future deployments. Photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

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